

## **Harry Mitchell came to Scottsdale this week to give away money.**

Congressmen do that a lot in their communities. But Mitchell wasn't seeking headlines for an earmark or pass-through grant. He was giving away money he was paid for doing his job.

Mitchell thinks he's paid too much. Since upsetting J.D. Hayworth for the privilege of representing the Northeast Valley and the rest of the 5th Congressional District, Mitchell has sponsored an annual bill to stop the House's automatic pay raise.

He hasn't been too successful. The first two years, his bill could hardly get a hearing. Last year, House leaders agreed to drop the pay raise. This year, Mitchell, a Democrat, and chief co-sponsor Ron Paul, R-Texas, have nearly one-third of the House signed onto the bill.

When he first got a pay raise against his will, Mitchell donated it to charity.

A critic told me at the time he found Mitchell's press conference to be distasteful. If Mitchell was sincere, he would just make the charitable donations quietly. There was no need to draw attention to himself.

In politics? Really?

I've known other politicians who made a great show of giving away a pay raise. The next year, they quietly pocketed the cash.

To his credit, Mitchell has given away the pay raise year after year.

Sure, it gets him attention. But just as importantly, it brings attention to non-profits. As the

economy continues to sputter, they need all the help they can get.

Three-fifths of Arizona's charities report having less revenue this year to serve an 85 percent increase in demand. Not many private businesses would attempt to work that miracle. It says something about the non-profit world that they expect such challenges.

Mitchell distributed his \$8,800 among 17 groups. Among them: the Arthritis Foundation; food providers Paz de Cristo and St. Mary's Food Bank; Sojourner Center and East Valley Crisis Center, which battle abuse; the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Scottsdale; and arts groups Childsplay and Friends of Tempe Center for the Arts.

The Sentinels of Freedom helps wounded soldiers restart their lives. A project in Tempe is providing homeless people with showers.

And New Global Citizens links high-schoolers with groups seeking to improve the world. Students at Desert Mountain High School, for instance, are helping a project that feeds and houses children in Kyrgyzstan. Chaparral High students support a project that repairs wells in Africa for a few dollars, rather than drilling a new one for up to \$50,000.

Mitchell's giving averages \$518 per group. That's not a lot of money, but it's cash each group didn't have before.

And, with any luck, it will inspire others to give. Few of us believe we're overpaid, so we can't follow Mitchell's example exactly. But you don't need to give away \$8,800 to make a difference.

You can donate gently used items. Organize a supply drive. Give your time. Reserve \$20 or \$50 or more from your tax refund to go to a charity.

It may not seem like much, but every little bit helps. And when you put all those little bits together, it makes a tremendous difference.

Charities understand that. It's how they accomplish their miracles.